

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Sharon Berry
Gerald Carr
Sandra Edwards
Gary Hall
Irma Nelson
Dickie Walker
Angyln Young

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Kara Aaron
Thomas Bradford
Larry Dickerson
Jim Hill
Ann Moore

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

None

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Erika Gee

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Mary Cabaniss, Charlie Cain-Davis, Kandy Cayce, Rhonda Garmon, Ginny McWilliams, Robert Lamb, Carol Marshall, Mona Mason, Katy Morris, Jim Pearson, Judith Renick, Kena Sabb, Tina Shelby, Lou Talley, Jessie Thomas, Tanya VanHouten, Coral Virden, Roberta Vontungeln, Donna Walker, Cassandra Williams

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Sharon Berry called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. . One amendment was made to the agenda. Mr. Gerald Carr made a motion to add the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award under new business. Mrs. Angyln Young seconded the motion. ***Motion Passed.***

A motion was made by Ms. Irma Nelson to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Gary Hall seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

APPROVAL OF 06/11/10 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Carr to approve the minutes. Mr. Dickie Walker seconded the motion. ***Motion passed.***

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

NATIONAL ISSUES:

HR734 Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act and its sister bill S841 have made a little progress, as has a similar bill from Senator Rockefeller S3302 – Motor Vehicle Safety Act. Basically sponsors are listening to the blind community as to what is needed to make hybrid and other *quiet cars* as safe as possible. HR3101 – the Twenty First Century Communication and Video *Accessibility Act* has moved along some. The Senate version S3304 (by Senator Pryor) has cleared the Senate and was held at desk (not assigned to a committee in the house yet) but did receive quick attention and actually went to hearings. HR4271 is the *Reauthorization of Workforce Investment* that has been brought up as other bills in previous sessions. I understand from the Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation that the current version of the bill is expected to see some progress this congressional session. HR886, the *Blind Persons Return to Work Act* is also of particular interest, as it amends social security to neutralize the economic disincentive to blind persons for employment.

STATE ISSUES:

Networking with Workforce Agencies. Federal regulations require DSB to develop cooperative agreements and actively network with agencies and organizations internal and external to the state Workforce System. To this end, DSB was very involved both as presenters and participants in the state *Employability Conference* held in late August. The meeting was a joint effort of multiple state agencies and related organizations sharing a common mission of employment for persons with disabilities.

DSB has also been partnering with the *Workforce Centers* to improve their capacity to provide employment services to persons who have vision problems. For years, the former Employment Security Department did not have the technology or the expertise to be able to effectively serve people who are blind and visually impaired in its local offices. Utilizing DHS Stimulus Funding, DSB entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Workforce Services – DWS to develop facilities and opportunities where persons who are blind and visually impaired can visit Centers and participate in independent job search using equipment, training and consultation provided by DSB, and data lines, facilities and labor provided by DWS. The staff of the DSB Tech Lab, along with Field Services have been providing active support to the increasing number of DSB consumers utilizing the workforce centers.

Cooperation with Non-Workforce Agencies. DSB has been working with the Division on Aging to promote employment of older persons who are blind and to enhance their independent living skills. Staff will attend the annual *Aging Conference* in late October

to share resources and strengthen the ties between the two agencies and their resource networks. DSB is also partnering with the ***Crime Victims with Disabilities Unit*** at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences Campus, and serves on its advisory committee. There are many programs represented on this committee: Sheriffs groups, police associations, advocates groups. It is an excellent resource for information and for training for staff and consumers on both prevention and how to best serve our constituents who have been crime victims.

Coordination with Education Entities. October 11-13, DSB staff will participate in the annual ***Transition Summit***, in compliance with the state plan, to gather information and network with our peers in Education and Special Education. Related to the goal of Transition, DSB also participated in the ***Youth Leadership Forum*** held to provide developmental leadership opportunities for outstanding youth with disabilities. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) has long been the sponsor of this activity. When DSB was faced with cancelling its 2010 summer Jumpstart Program for Transition Age students, due to construction at its normal venue of Arkansas School for the Blind (ASB), ARS generously offered to expand its registration for Youth Leadership Forum to include a higher than normal participation by eligible DSB consumers. Jumpstart will return to its ASB home in the summer of 2011.

Arkansas Independent Living Council (AIRC). DSB has been working with the AIRC to finalize the State Plan for Independent Living. The ARS Commissioner and the DSB Director serve as ex officio members of the AIRC per federal law and Governor's Executive Order. One of the sticking points in getting the plan approved by RSA has been the fact that the plan must include a proposal for how the AIRC intends to increase the number of CILs to give the state better geographic coverage in the long run. Because the existing CILs are minimally funded, no expansion plan had been proposed previously. RSA held teleconferences to facilitate the discussion. A final proposal is expected by late September to allow RSA time for approval and subsequent funding of existing centers by October 1.

Outreach to Unserved and Underserved Populations. DSB has just concluded a Request for Qualifications process to contract with another Center for Independent Living (CIL) to promote outreach to individuals of minority populations who are persons with vision impairments. The CIL will provide the location and opportunities for DSB staff to meet with representatives of churches and other Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). The purpose is to educate the Faith Based Organizations on the services provided by DSB, and let the organization reach inward to educate and support their minority constituents who may then choose to refer themselves to DSB for services. The FBOs are already natural partners of DSB due to their mission of voluntary service. The bridge agreement enables the FBOs to make the best use of their voluntary services to eligible members with vision

problems, by maintaining their existing services and ‘wrapping them around’ available DSB services. A particular focus of the Bridge initiative is to reach out to the organizations in the Springdale area who serve the *Marshallese Community*. By population, the area is the highest concentration of Marshall Islanders in the United States.

Disaster Preparedness. At the end of September, the Administrative Assistants who support the five geographic service teams in the state, will represent their areas at the statewide Disaster Preparedness conference in Little Rock. The agenda offers a lot of information, techniques and contacts that the reps can take back to their local areas. Working with the area supervisors and the DSB Reading Service, they will customize a disaster preparedness plan for their local area targeted at the needs of DSB consumers.

Cost Allocation. In October 2009, DSB began utilizing the DHS automated Cost Allocation process under the department’s accountability plan. The online process automatically charges labor hours and applies related incidental costs (such as travel) to program funds based on time study input daily by DSB staff who deliver the services. This results in a very strict accounting for program funds and is altering the number of service hours DSB Rehab Teachers and support personnel can provide to consumers who are not seeking employment.

DIVISION ISSUES:

Year End Performance. *Vocational Rehabilitation Program.* Along with the rest of the nation, DSB performance in VR has been lagging behind our 2009 performance level of 350 successful rehabilitation outcomes. Even with the bad economy, DSB established 350 as the goal in the 2010 state plan for the federal fiscal year, ending September 30th, because federal rules require a target of no less than the prior year. As we approach year end, the number of successful rehabilitation outcomes, experienced by the VR consumers we serve, stands at 212, in spite of all the hard work of consumers and their VR teams. I spoke with a colleague in another state regarding this dilemma, yesterday, and he said, “I’ll swap statistics with you”, which made me realize that the economy has been particularly harder on certain other states. The final result is not expected to change greatly. While it is the norm for DSB to close a high number of cases successfully in late September each year, the target of 350 is not physically or mathematically possible for VR staff and consumers at this stage. *Older Blind Program.* In contrast to the struggles of the VR Program in the tight economy, the consumers and staff of the Older Blind program have experienced success at a level equal to and even exceeding 2009.

Staff Turnover. As expected, DSB is suffering from frequent retirement of staff who have been with the division many years. Just this month, we will lose Ms. JoAnn Hulsey in DSB finance, Mrs. Gloria Mance will be retiring October 22.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. DSB continues to implement the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) within the state plan. This is the outline DSB provides RSA each year on what steps it will take to ensure it can obtain and retain qualified staff to carry out its duties within federal regulations. Those regulations place priority upon certification of VR Counselors and their line supervisors. If the certification path for VR Counselors and supervisors is progressing well each year, financial support can be extended to other caseload personnel, such as Rehab Teachers and paraprofessional staff. However, a formal path does not exist for paraprofessionals who seek to change careers to pursue caseload assignment and certification. This issue will be addressed later on the agenda.

DSB Jonesboro Office. In Jonesboro, DSB is located with the rest of DHS in the Arkansas Services Center. The center will be closed at an unknown point in the future, and DHS is working with Arkansas Building Authority to secure new offices that can meet the needs of a large and technologically advanced workforce.

NFB Newslines. NFB Newslines is a contracted service under DSB's Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS). Initially DSB had experienced some start up problems, recurring downtime and erratic coverage of the state papers. However, these 'growing pains' seem to have decreased as NFB and DSB each becomes more familiar with the other's systems and processes.

DSB Vending Facility Program. DSB has completed update of the Highway Vending contracts, providing unmanned machine locations which produce income for licensed blind vendors. Other contracts on government property have included the Fort Smith Post Office location previously. However, DSB recently granted the General Services Administration a temporary five-year waiver (for this location to be operated by another entity), because the diminished traffic could not support a vending location that would be a profitable concern for a DSB vendor.

Job Developers/Job Coaches. DSB has implemented multiple one-time initiatives under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Basically all original initiatives are either complete or are budgeted to be accomplished under regular VR operating funds in the current budget. The exception to this statement is the Job Developer/Job Coach Initiative. DSB requested the ten ARRA positions to be authorized in the coming biennium as a part of on-going VR services. However, Governor Beebe wants state agencies to seek other means to continue productivity realized under ARRA programs, rather than increase the level of state employees as a result of the Reinvestment Act. To this end, DSB has budgeted to continue the job development function through contracts with local service providers.

Biennial Budget. As approved previously, the DSB Budget provides for continuation of existing staff (except for ARRA mentioned above) and programming. The executive budget hearing is September 20 with DFA, and the Arkansas Legislative Council Hearing is November 9.

NCSAB. The National Council of State Agencies for the Blind semi-annual meeting will be held November 10-12. Business and Technology Administrator, Mr. Jim Pearson and I will be participating. The emphasis at NCSAB will be on the experience of various state agencies for the blind in development of viable self-employment programs for consumers. The discussion will center upon practices found effective in rural settings compared to those successful in urban environments.

Volunteerism. In recent years, DSB has been working to increase its number of volunteers who serve DSB consumers. Volunteer Developer Mrs. Charlie Cain-Davis indicates that the program has grown noticeably in the previous year.

Reallotment. DSB has been able to qualify for 1.8M in federal reallotment funding in Vocational Rehabilitation this year, because of prior years' performances and continued support of appropriate matching funds by the governor and the legislature.

END OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR PAULINE ESTHER BERRY

PARAPROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP. Mrs. Katy Morris reported that there is not a mechanism for financial support of the paraprofessional staff seeking to become certified personnel. The proposed Pauline Esther Berry Scholarship Award would be paid from funds bequeathed by Mrs. Berry many years ago. The bequest resulted in the establishment of the DSB Gift and Bequest Fund and its use is determined by the DSB Board. There is about \$25,000 dollars in the account and it should last for awhile even if this board chose to implement this proposal over time. My suggestion is to establish the scholarship program under law through special language, utilizing regular agency funds. If the special language does not succeed, I ask the board to take specific action to permit the use of the Berry Bequest funding to accomplish the same effect for paraprofessional staff only who seek certification. The proposal is attached as a formal part of these minutes. If approved, the board would be permitting the Director to award a maximum of two \$500 scholarships per semester to eligible paraprofessional staff.

Mr. Carr made a motion that the board establish the Pauline Esther Berry Paraprofessional Scholarship and include the Guidelines presented by Mrs. Morris. Ms. Young seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

Mrs. Morris noted that a rotating team of DSB staff members is being established to review the periodic progress of the overall Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) and that she would assign the team to consider applications for the Berry Scholarship and recommend recipients to her as being most likely to enhance the division goal of increasing the number of certified staff in caseload positions. Mrs. Morris will report to the board when the process is in place and make the final determination of recipient(s).

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT - Mrs. Ann Moore, Chairman of the subcommittee consisting of herself, Mr. Dickie Walker and Ms. Sandy Edwards, gave the report. The winner of the Clerical Services Award was Mrs. Linda Haynes. The winner of the Direct Client Services Award was Mr. Jimmy Jones. The winner of the Administrative Support Services Award was Mrs. Feona Barnett. The 2010 DSB Employee Of The Year winner overall was Mr. Jimmy Jones. The awards will be presented to the employees at the DSB Statewide Meeting November 2 in West Memphis. Mr. Dickie Walker *made a motion* to accept the committee's recommendation. Mr. Carr seconded the motion.

JIM HUDSON ADVOCACY AWARD. In December 2008, the Board set up guidelines for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award. The minutes read, "on behalf of the planning committee for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award, the committee recommended that the award be given to an individual sighted or blind who has made a substantial contribution to the quality of life of blind or visually impaired people in Arkansas. The committee members are Mrs. Irma Nelson, Chair; Mrs. Kara Aaron and Mr. Gerald Carr. Mr. Robert Lamb will provide staff support to the committee. The committee will accept nominations during each quarter and bring those nominations to the full board for consideration. We do have one nomination available. Awards will not necessarily be made every year. Criteria for the nominations will be posted on the DSB website. Mrs. Young made a motion, that if there is a nomination for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award throughout the course of the year that the award will be given during the DSB state conference. Mr. Carr seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.* Ms. Sandy Edwards made a motion that the committee Chair schedule a committee meeting via teleconference and the committee will decide on a nominee. Mr. Carr seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.* Mrs. Kara Aaron made a motion that nominations for the Jim Hudson Advocacy Award will be accepted throughout the course of each year, however, nominations must be received by the committee by August 15. Mrs. Young seconded the motion. *Motion Passed.*

2010 CONVENTION REPORTS - Reports regarding the 2010 National Convention of ACB, NFB and Randolph-Sheppard were submitted with the board packets. Ms. Sandy Edwards expressed her appreciation to the board for allowing her to represent the board at the ACB National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Gary Hall expressed his

appreciation to the board for allowing him to represent the board at the NFB National Convention in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Thomas Bradford expressed his appreciation to the board for allowing him to represent the board at the Randolph-Sheppard National Convention in Arlington, Virginia.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT - No representative was present.
No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) –
No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet and is attached as a formal part of these minutes.

CONSUMER INPUT – The American Council of the Blind (ACB) State Convention will be held the last weekend in April 2011 in Hot Springs at the Austin Hotel. The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) State Convention will be held October 15-16, 2010 in Little Rock at the Comfort Inn. The NFB National Convention will be held in Orlando, Florida next year.

The Consumer of the Year nominations are due from the VR Counselors to the Field Administrator by October 15, 2010. Ten nominations have been received. Mrs. Donna Walker reported that she is waiting for the 3 final nominations. Mrs. Walker will prepare the nomination packets and forward to the board committee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – The board adjourned into executive session to discuss the DSB Director's evaluation. The board reconvened and announced that the evaluation had been approved. The Board Chairman expressed her appreciation to Mrs. Morris for the year that she had given the board and the Division of Services for the Blind and commended her for the work that she had done which was an exceptional job.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING. The next regular quarterly board meeting will be held Friday, December 10, 2010, at 1:00 p.m. (to include Consumer Of The Year Celebration) at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South Building, First Floor, Conference Rooms A & B.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Irma Nelson
Secretary

Attachments

[AILC Report August 2010](#)

[AILC Report September 2010](#)

[AILC Report October 2010](#)

[DSB specLanguage Paraprofessional](#)